

Little Known Cultural Heritage Routes

On November 19th, our students from the 2nd and 3rd year of the bilingual programme went on an school trip to Toledo to visit the Roman Baths and the Caves of Hercules. It was a guided route, fully in English, available by the Consortium.

These places, that were inaccessible to the public for many years – in some cases centuries, hold unique elements from various periods in our history, which played an important role during their time and are now part of our cultural heritage.

The Roman Baths

Discovered in 1986, the archaeological remains found at the site are a point of reference for the construction systems and processes used in Roman Engineering and Architecture, some of which were a true technological revolution in Hispanic times – such as the use of limestone concrete (Opus Caementicium) or arches made with stone voussoirs. The surface below the floor had a heating system (hypocaust) used to heat the room, in order to create an atmosphere similar to that of a sauna or hot room (caldarium) – a basic element in the Roman bath ritual, present in all bath constructions at the time.

As regards the chronology of the remains, they correspond to a period between the end of the I century and mid II century AD.

The Caves of Hercules

The Caves of Hercules site presents a rich architectural history, occupied by buildings from various periods throughout history: a Roman well (built in the second half of the AD I century), a Christian temple erected over the well during Visigoth times, a mosque, and a new temple in homage of Saint Gines from the XII century

Several legends surrounding the origins of the Caves of Hercules are known today. According to medieval texts, the Caves were hollows where Hercules, founder of the city, would provide an architectural structure to set up one of his palaces – a place where magic arts and necromancy were practised. Other legends relate to the destruction of the Visigoth kingdom in the hands of the Arabs. According to the texts, Hercules used his clairvoyant abilities to write about the destruction of the Visigoth reign, but left it in a locked chest indicating that each king added another lock. It was king Don Rodrigo's curiosity, or greed, that drove him to open the chest, thus releasing the curse of the prophecy.

Our students enjoyed history in a different way. They learnt how the remains of history made the theory a reality.